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A Lexical Comparison of Icelandic Sign Language and Danish Sign Language

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Abstract

This paper reports on the first empirical investigation of lexical similarity between Icelandic Sign Language and Danish Sign Language. Despite anecdotal reports of similarity between the two varieties and historical records detailing close contact between the two communities, to date no study has been undertaken. Drawing on previous studies including Bickford (2005), McKee and Kennedy (1998, 2000a, 2000b) and Parkhurst and Parkhurst (2001), signs were elicited via a word list adapted from Swadesh (1955) and modified by Woodward (1978, 1991) for the purposes of researching sign languages. The signs for 292 lexical items were analysed by comparing the parameters of hand configuration (together with orientation of the hand/palm), location and movement and classified as **Identical**, *Similar* or *Different*. Results revealed a high percentage of similarity. A much higher degree of lexical similarity was found in the realisation of country names than any other semantic category. The study contributes to work in the field of Nordic Sign Languages and has methodological implications for the study of sign language vocabulary internationally.

Key words: Danish sign language, Icelandic sign language, lexical similarity

Introduction

To date, no comparison has been made between the sign languages of Denmark and Iceland, despite anecdotal reports of lexical similarity within the literature. Prior to 1867, deaf children born in Iceland were sent to Denmark to be educated,¹ and this, together with the close cultural, historical and political ties between the countries and the close association between the Deaf communities suggests close

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linguistic contact and possibly a high degree of linguistic similarity. However, whilst Danish Sign Language (DSL) might have had a considerable past influence over the variety used in Iceland, the burgeoning autonomy of the Icelandic Deaf community has undoubtedly led to a certain degree of divergence. This paper reports upon a preliminary investigation of contemporary lexical similarity between the two languages.

Background

Icelandic Sign Language and the Icelandic Deaf Community

The population of Iceland is small with approximately 300,000 people inhabiting the island. Communication with the *Félag Heyrnarlausra* (Deaf Association of Iceland) reveals that the number of those who are Deaf users of Icelandic Sign Language (ISL) is approximately 300, the vast majority of whom live in Reykjavik and the surrounding districts, with a few others living in Akureyri, in the North (population 16,000) and Fljótshálsa, a municipality incorporating the villages of Egilsstaðir and Fellabær (population 3500). Residence in the capital is undoubtedly motivated by economic and educational factors. Reykjavik and the surrounding districts are home to almost two thirds of the population and therefore provide employment opportunities. Moreover the school for deaf children, which is itself attached to a mainstream school, is also situated there.

Although the Deaf community is small, it is thriving and well-connected. The Icelandic Association of the Deaf was founded on 11th February 1960 and it continues to guard, promote and fight for the rights and well being of the Deaf and hard of hearing people of Iceland. One of the priorities of the association is to improve the quality of life of its members by fighting for equal opportunities and supporting attempts to combat social isolation by running social activities. The Icelandic Association of the Deaf provides general information on the implications of deafness and hearing loss, on Deaf culture and Icelandic Sign Language, the “mother tongue” of the Deaf people of Iceland.

In 1999, the Ministry of Education acknowledged Icelandic Sign Language in the Icelandic basic curriculum as being the first language of Deaf people, with (written) Icelandic, as a second language for Deaf Icelanders. The basic curriculum also acknowledges that sign language carries important implications for linguistic, cognitive and personality development, and therefore has serious implications for the future of every deaf child. However the Deaf Association informs us that this basic curriculum only applies to children over six years of age.

The profile of Icelandic Sign Language has certainly risen in the past decade. In 1999 the Icelandic Association of the Deaf won a major victory against the Icelandic broadcasting association following their refusal to simultaneously interpret the electioneering debate on Icelandic National Television. The Court recognised the obligation of the defendant to have this debate interpreted simultaneously in sign language and ruled that the broadcasting association’s refusal to do so was unlawful. In 2003 Sigurlín Margrét Sigurðardóttir, substitute MP for the Liberal Party, became the first Deaf MP in Iceland. At the time there were no Deaf Members of Parliament in Scandinavia. She delivered her maiden speech in sign on October 2nd 2003 and

the event attracted enormous media attention. It was the first time ISL was used in Parliament. Also in 2003, Vigdís Finnbogadóttir, former president of Iceland, became a patroness of sign languages in the Nordic countries. Iceland's Deaf Association currently holds the chairmanship in the Nordic Council of the Deaf and one of the main endeavours of the Council is to ensure that Nordic sign languages are included in the Nordic Language Contract.

'The Communication Centre for The Deaf and Hard of Hearing' (*Samskiptamiðstöð heyrnarlausra og heyrnarskertra*, www.shh.is) was also established in 1990. The objectives of this centre are to promote equal rights for Deaf people by supporting services to them in sign language. Other identified tasks include: researching Icelandic Sign Language; teaching sign language; and functioning as the centre for interpreting and other services. Their stated objectives are to ensure that:

- ISL may enjoy the same respect and status as other languages;
- Deaf citizens are able to participate fully in society in Sign Language;
- Deaf citizens have the right to decide which language they wish to use;
- hearing people accept and respect the rights of Deaf people.

Icelandic Sign Language and its relationship to Danish Sign Language

There is little reference to the relationship between Icelandic Sign Language and Danish Sign Language. *Ethnologue* (Gordon, 2005, on-line version) is one of few sources and includes an entry on ISL, noting that it is "based on DSL but has changed and developed since then so it is not the same today."

Following conversations with Icelandic Deaf Community members in Reykjavik, the general consensus was that only 20% of the lexicon of ISL (see below for further discussion) was the same as DSL, whilst a study of the expression of simultaneity in children's and adults' narratives in ISL mentions briefly that "Icelandic Sign Language is different from Danish Sign Language" (Sverrisdóttir, 2000, p. 23).

Lexical studies of Spoken and Sign Languages

Previous lexical studies of Indo-European spoken languages have used standard word lists to examine close genetic relationships or lexical borrowing between varieties. Swadesh's (1955) 200 and 100 item word lists were commonly used. These lists include words that share a number of features in common, notably those that are:

- frequently used in everyday speech;
- acquired early on by children;
- exist in all languages; and
- seldom borrowed from other languages.

However these listings have proven to be inadequate for the study of language use in urban populations and sign languages (Woll, 1984). In relation to sign languages, a significant number of items contained in the original list were body parts and personal pronouns. As these are articulated via pointing in many sign languages, these would provide for an artificially high reporting of similarity. In 1978 Woodward made some important modifications to the original Swadesh word list for the purposes of sign language research and used this to undertake a comprehensive comparison of signs from American Sign Language and French Sign Language and this framework has subsequently been exploited by a number of researchers. Moreover Stokoe and Kucshel (1979) also developed a 'Basic Sign Vocabulary' list for field researchers investigating unstudied sign languages. This list contained 96 items taken from the 200-word Swadesh list with a number of adaptations (e.g. colour terms and numerals except number "one" were removed).

Recent lexical studies of sign languages have had a broad geographic reach. Mexican Sign Language and Eastern European Sign Languages have been studied by Bickford (1991, 2005). Hurlbut, (2000) has undertaken a preliminary survey of the sign languages of Malaysia. Woodward (1991) investigated the sign language of Costa Rica and Vanhecke & De Weerd's (2004) have investigated the regional dialects of Flemish Sign Language (VG/FSL). Most similar to the present study however are those reported in McKee & Kennedy (1998, 2000a, 2000b) and Johnston (2000), who investigated the relationship between British Sign Language (BSL), New Zealand Sign Language (NZL) and Australian Sign Language (Auslan).

Some lexical research has concentrated on particular aspects of methodological design in the construction of word lists and methods of elicitation of signs, for example, Osugi et al. (1999) and Parkhurst and Parkhurst (2003) who investigated the effects of iconicity.

Development of Lexical Item List/Comparison of Sign Languages

Researchers constructing lists of lexical items for the elicitation and comparison of signs have used different methodologies. For example, some lexical studies, such as those undertaken by Johnston (2000) and McKee and Kennedy (1998, 2000a, 2000b), have used established sign language dictionaries as a resource. This method is not without its limitations however. As with spoken language dictionaries Editorial decisions regarding inclusion of signs may mean that variant and colloquial forms are not included or under-represented. Moreover, depending on the age of the dictionary, contemporary usage may also not be accounted for. Bickford (1991) highlights other difficulties. In his study of variation in Mexican Sign Language, he describes difficulties such as inadequacies of transcriptions or difficulties in interpreting diagrams, and lists the following details as frequently being unclear in interpreting sign formation:

- number of repetitions of a movement;
- exact path of movement;
- direction of rotation for circular movements;
- force, speed and length of movement;
- presence of special facial expressions.

In contrast, other studies have attempted to elicit naturalistic data from native sign language users (cf. Vanhecke & De Weerd, 2004). This method ensures that variant and contemporary forms are recorded from diverse groupings of informants, (e.g. different ages / regional / social backgrounds).

Elicitation of Signs

Studies choosing to elicit signs from individual signers have adopted different approaches and presented different stimuli to elicit responses. The presentation of orthographic stimuli has been used by some. One noted limitation with orthography is that the written form may influence the sign language production. This argument has been particularly levelled at studies investigating syntactic structure; however, in the case of single lexical items this influence is considered to be limited, unless signers choose to resort to finger-spelling (Parkhurst & Parkhurst, 2001, 2003; Bickford, 2005).

Rather than orthography, in their study of regional variation in VG/FSL, Vanhecke and De Weerd (2004) used sign language with the aid of supporting graphic materials such as pictures with specific themes, as did Osugi et al. (1999) in their study of gestural systems on Amami Island, and Bickford (2001) in his study of the sign languages of Eastern Europe. One potential difficulty with the use of graphic materials is that abstract concepts are difficult to convey pictorially (e.g., BECAUSE / FORGIVE). There may also be confusion as to the target item, e.g. a picture of a house with an arrow pointing to the roof may elicit the sign HOUSE rather than ROOF.

On the other hand, a potential benefit of using sign language to elicit signs is that researchers can access sign use across all members of a Deaf community and this may be important in some Deaf communities where literacy is poor.

Analysis of Sign Structure

In studies of sign lexicon there is no standard framework for the analysis of sign structure/phonology. Different studies have utilised different approaches, or created different analytic categories. For example in their study of the relationship of the lexicon of NZSL to BSL, Auslan and ASL, McKee and Kennedy (2000a) analysed signs according to four parameters: hand configuration; orientation of the palm; location and movement. Non-manual features such as facial characteristics of signs were not included in the comparison. Signs were classified as being "Identical, "Different but Related" and "Different." Where all four parameters were the same, signs were classified as "Identical." If they differed in two or more parameters then they were classified as "Different" and signs that differed in only one aspect were classified as "Different but Related". A similar study of BSL, Auslan and NZSL by Johnston (2003) categorises those signs reported by McKee and Kennedy as "Different but Related", as "Similar."

McKee and Kennedy (2000a) included an extra category of "Other" for signs that differed in other ways than the four main parameters (e.g. handedness).

Johnston's approach was to classify signs that differed only in handedness as "Identical". The property of 'handedness' refers either to a sign being one-handed or double-handed—having two hands mirroring each other symmetrically—or a sign with the presence or absence of a base hand. Johnston (2000, p. 50) states that certainly in Auslan the overall meaning and the specification of the aspects of the dominant hand does not change regardless of the presence or absence of a base hand.

To illustrate, the following images depict the lexical item "now" in ISL and in DSL.

"NOW"

Icelandic (Núna) Clip

Danish (Nu) Clip

In their study of lexical variation in VG/FSL, Vanhecke and De Weerd (2004) analysed signs according to the four manual parameters of hand configuration, orientation, location and movement, and classified signs as 'identical', 'similar', 'related' or 'different'.

Approaches to the Study of Lexical Comparison and Aims of This Study

Two different approaches to lexical comparisons have been undertaken in the study of sign languages, each with distinct objectives (Parkhurst & Parkhurst, 2003). Studies investigating *lexical similarity* which attempt to establish a correlation between the form of lexical items and the level of intelligibility amongst users in contemporary usage and studies investigating *historical relatedness* (also known as cognate studies). The present study is concerned with the former—investigating lexical similarity—but does not investigate mutual intelligibility between the varieties.

The following research questions are addressed:

1. Is there empirical evidence of phonological similarity in the lexicon of Icelandic Sign Language and Danish Sign Language?
2. Are there any semantic categories that appear to bear a close similarity between the two languages and how does this compare with another non-Nordic sign language – British Sign Language)?
3. Is there evidence that the signs for the names of countries may be becoming standardised, at least in Europe.
4. What improvements need to be made to the current methodology designed to elicit lexical forms in sign language?

Methodology

Word List

Elicitation of signs was obtained by presentation of orthographic stimuli taken from a word list constructed specifically for this project. This was compiled by combining, refining and piloting a number of wordlists used in previous lexical studies of sign languages, namely the Swadesh word list modified by Woodward 1978 for sign languages and used in McKee and Kennedy's study of BSL, Auslan and NZL in 1998, together with the lists used in Parkhurst and Parkhurst and Bickford studies in 2003 and 2005 respectively (as discussed above).

In the case of the communities under investigation it was felt that a written presentation of word stimuli would be an appropriate method to use for the following reasons:

1. single lexical items were presented and therefore concerns about word order and the syntactic influence of written language on sign language were redundant;
2. the investigation was carried out on groups of bilingual informants with a good command of the written language and the sign language variety in their respective countries.

In total the final word list for this study revealed 95% comparability with Woodward's list; 85% with Bickford's and 83% with Parkhurst & Parkhurst's. Omissions were made on the basis of cultural irrelevance and/or opacity of meaning. For example, whilst the inclusion of "VIRGIN MARY" was appropriate for the Parkhurst & Parkhurst study undertaken in Catholic Spain, it was not considered suitable for Iceland, which is a Lutheran country. In Icelandic "TAIL" offers many possible translations depending on what animal the tail is attached to (see below).

A further 41 items (amounting to 15% of the total) were added, extending items within already established semantic categories in order to extend the number of target items elicited. These were selected on the basis that they were:

1. high frequency lexical items;
2. easy to understand;
3. likely to elicit a standardised sign and possible variant forms;
4. they belonged to the same semantic category as words that were chosen from the three aforementioned lists. For example, "AUTUMN" and "SPRING" were added to the category of seasons; numbers "11-20" were added to the list of numerals; categories of interrogative pronouns; verbs and adjectives were similarly extended.

The main word list for the study consisted of 270 items and these were grouped into semantic categories and labelled according to their word class.

Unlike other studies, words for countries were omitted from the main word list, as experience of other sign languages suggests that signs for some countries have become increasingly standardised in their phonological realisation in recent years, particularly among users of European Sign Languages. To test this theory a separate word list of 30 countries was used in order to elicit signs for these in both Iceland

and Denmark. The data from each country could then be compared an unrelated sign language, British Sign Language, for these 30 items.

Once constructed in English, native speakers translated the word list into Icelandic and Danish. These translations were then cross referenced and checked by second translators. Modifications to the word list were made and a total of four items were removed and replaced which were again translated, cross-referenced and tested. For instance, the Icelandic word “*Dýr*” (Animal) had a similar meaning to “*Expensive*”, whilst “*Tail*” (as previously mentioned) had a variety of possible translations in Icelandic depending on the animal e.g. “*skott*”, “*rófa*”, “*hali*”, “*tagl*” or “*stél.*” (See Appendix for the word list with Icelandic and Danish translations.)

Informants

The first author made contact with a sign language linguist in Denmark, who introduced further sign language contacts in Denmark and Iceland, one of whom is a key figure involved in the Virtual Sign Language Dictionary Project at the Centre for Sign Language in Copenhagen. Both individuals were instrumental in acting on the researcher’s behalf in their respective countries, organising a space to collect the data and seeking out and securing ten willing informants of different sexes, ages and places of origin within the target countries.

Ten informants were interviewed in Iceland and ten in Denmark. Of the ten Icelandic informants seven were Deaf and three were hearing. The three hearing individuals were fluent users of ISL. One of the three came from a Deaf family and was therefore a native user of the language. All ten of the participants in the Danish group were Deaf and were regular informants for the Danish Sign Language Dictionary project at the Centre for Sign Language in Copenhagen. The majority of the informants in both countries were engaged in professions involving their native sign language (e.g. teaching, research, interpreting, Deaf Education). Details can be seen in Tables 1a and 1b below:

Table 1a: Icelandic Informants

Name	Age	Gender	Region	Profession
Helga	56	F	Reykjavik	Teacher deaf school
Vala	46	F	Reykjavik	Sign language teacher
Hildur	36	F	Reykjavik	Sign language interpreter
Silja	46	F	Reykjavik	Principal deaf school
Jón	76	M	Reykjavik	Retired
Baldur*	28	M	Reykjavik	Student
Signý	31	F	Reykjavik	Sign Language Teacher
Kristín*	42	F	Reykjavik	Sign language teacher
Erla*	32	F	Reykjavik	Sign language interpreter
Álfrún	35	F	Reykjavik	Sign language interpreter

Table 1b: Danish Informants

Name	Age	Gender	Region	Profession
Lisbet *	59	F	Copenhagen	Interpreter Trainer/SL Teacher
Lise *	58	F	Copenhagen	Interpreter Trainer/SL Teacher
Toben *	25	M	Copenhagen	Researcher (SL Linguistics)
Trine *	35	F	Copenhagen	Interpreter Trainer/SL Teacher
Jonas *	31	M	Copenhagen	Teacher of Deaf Adults
Niels	28	M	Horsens	Butcher
Rikke *	34	F	Copenhagen	Interpreter Trainer/SL Teacher
Ditte *	30	F	Copenhagen	Teacher/Researcher
Hanne	42	F	Aarhus	Interpreter Trainer/SL Teacher
Majbrit	37	M	Odense	Carpenter

*=Deaf Family Members

Procedure

The informants met with the researcher and the procedure for the elicitation of signs was explained. The researcher communicated using gesture and signs. In the event of miscommunication or misunderstanding, users of the native sign language, who understood the protocol, were on hand to intervene in both countries. Informants were told that a list of words would be consecutively shown on a screen behind the researcher. On seeing the word, the informants were to provide the corresponding sign (or signs if they wished to give variant forms). The informants were told that this would be recorded and were instructed to place their hands on their lap once they had given their sign so that the researcher knew they had finished and did not want to provide any variant forms.

Each lexical item was numbered and shown in numerical order from 1-300 (this consisted of the main word list of 270 items together with the additional list of 30 words for countries). The informants sat opposite the researcher in front of a white screen and on seeing the words projected in front of them produced the target sign. Words were projected usually for no more than ten seconds. The data was recorded using a digital camera with a built in video recording function. Each sign was recorded as a separate video clip except items 251-270 (numbers 1-20) which were captured as a single video clip as informants were asked to count in succession.

Capturing each lexical item as an individual video clip rather than the whole list in one continual recording on a conventional video camera was advantageous for

two reasons. Firstly, it meant that no video editing software had to be used to separate the signs into individual clips and secondly, it meant that each clip could be easily labelled and filed. Each video clip was labelled with the informant's name and the number corresponding to the word from the list, e.g. the video clip for word number 1 (Man) was labelled "informants name_001" for that particular informant. During the recording the first author also vocally articulated the number of the word in the wordlist so that in the event of uncertainty in the labelling and filing of the clips, it was easy to identify.

A folder was created for each item on the list and in each folder was filed the video clip from each of the informants that contained footage of the sign given. The folders for each of the 300 items containing the video clips were filed into a folder labelled Icelandic Informants and Danish Informants respectively. A total of 6000 video clips were obtained (300 items x ten informants x two groups) holding over 6300 signs (including variant forms).

This procedure was piloted in each country using two of the informants from the group prior to collecting the data from the remaining eight. Piloting the wordlist helped clarify a couple of problematic items. The Icelandic word for 'Feather' (*Fjöður*) looks very similar to the Icelandic word for 'fjord' (*ffjörður*) and in Danish, 'tree' and the material 'wood' are the same (*Træ*). Misunderstandings were rectified.

Framework for analysis

Drawing on approaches used in previous studies (as detailed above) and discussions with other sign language linguists (Bencie Woll and Adam Schembri, DCAL, University of London and Rachel Sutton Spence, Bristol University) the following framework for analysis was constructed. Signs were analysed according to the parameters of *hand configuration*, *location* and *movement*. It was anticipated that the number of items on the word list that elicited signs that shared the same location, movement and hand configuration, yet differed in terms of the actual orientation of the hand would be few in number. In this instance, it was decided that orientation of the palm/hand would be incorporated into the hand configuration parameter and if there were any differences in the orientation of the palm/hand these would be noted in the analysis. As relatively few items elicited specific non-manual features (interrogative pronouns accounting for most of them), facial characteristics of signs were disregarded.

Therefore the following analytic categories were drawn:

1. Two signs were considered **Identical** if all three parameters were the same. Signs that differed only in "handedness" (single or double-handed or with the presence or absence of a base hand) were considered to be identical but these differences were noted as part of the analysis.
2. Two signs were considered **Similar** if they shared two parameters in common but differed in the third.
3. Two signs would be considered **Different** if two or more parameters were different. (Cases for 'possible relatedness' could be made in the sharing of one parameter – see results section below).

It is important to note that the terms for categories are only convenient analytical labels and not absolutes. It would not be entirely accurate to state that two given signs, even within one variety/group were 100% identical given the propensity for phonological variation and it is therefore given that signs that are classified as “identical” for example are to be interpreted as being “the same” in terms of the overall production of the parameters.

Informal Interviews

As well as the elicitation of signs from the two groups of informants in Iceland and Denmark, during the field trip to Iceland there was an opportunity for informal conversations with members of the Icelandic Deaf community during social events to try and gauge their attitudes towards the status of Icelandic Sign Language. The first author was a user of British Sign Language with a working knowledge of spoken modern Icelandic and was able to communicate questions reasonably easily.

Results

Informal Interviews

The overwhelming consensus was that Icelandic Sign Language was indeed historically related to Danish Sign Language but that the contemporary variety is somewhat different. When asked what percentage of signs in the Icelandic variety were the same as the Danish variety, the majority of those that were consulted offered 20% as a benchmark figure. A few people mentioned that one older member of the Icelandic Deaf community, who was born in the Faroe Islands and educated in Denmark before moving to Iceland in the 1950's as a young man was quite influential with regard to the lexicon of the Icelandic variety. One woman noted that “Danish” signs are still being used amongst a handful of Deaf people living in the Akureyri area (North Iceland).

Analysis of Signs

Discounted Signs

Eight items in the word list had to be eliminated from the final analysis because there was either confusion as to their meaning or because there was too much variation within one or both groups of informants to be able to obtain consensus. These items are listed in Table 2 below:

Table 2

103	dust (n)
104	earth (n)
105	ice (n)
190	(to) finish (v)
193	(to) dance (v)
202	(to) cook (v)
221	thin (adj)
223	narrow (adj)

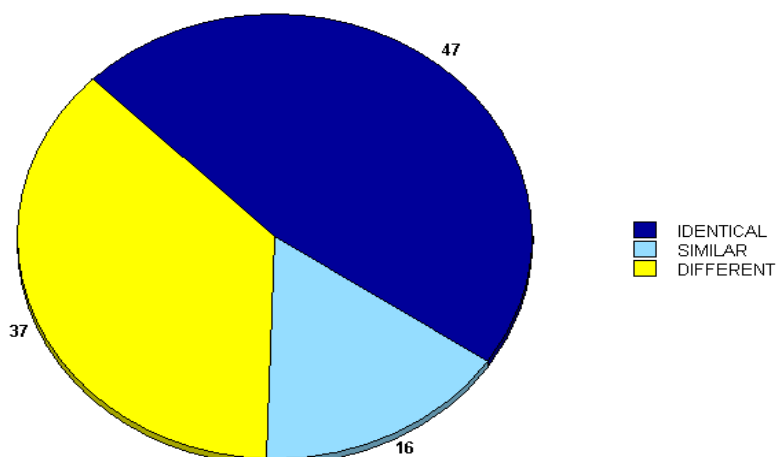
In the case of *EARTH* informants in both groups seemed to be unsure as to whether or not the target meaning was “*SOIL*”, “*PLANET*” or “*GROUND*.” Similarly with *ICE*, whilst the Danish group had a standard sign and appeared to understand the target meaning (the natural frozen substance that is *ICE*) the Icelandic group seemed unsure as to whether or not the target meaning was *ICE* or *ICE-CREAM* (incidentally, the Icelandic sign for *ICE-CREAM* is also the Icelandic sign for the country *ICELAND*). This is because the Icelandic word for *ICE* and *ICE-CREAM* is the same.

In the case of *DUST*, *FINISH*, *COOK*, *DANCE*, *THIN* and *NARROW* whilst the meaning was clear and unambiguous, there was considerable diversity in the production of signs within groups as well as between groups. Some signers conveyed *DUST* as particles swirling in the air, others by running their finger over a flat surface collecting dust, others by tapping an object and seeing the dust fly up into the air. Most Deaf Icelanders (and at least three Deaf Danes) seemed to all produce the verb *DANCE* rather differently to each other. Whilst *COOK* was conveyed as a compound *MAKE* and *FOOD* by some informants (in both groups) whilst others were productive in their lexicon by stirring a bowl slowly with a wooden spoon, some quickly with a whisk and one or two informants produced the item as *FIRE* (from an oven or stove). *THIN* was produced in various different ways ranging from a thin *person* to a thin *object*. Variations of *NARROW* were produced by various informants in both groups, with contrast in terms of location and hand configuration and with one informant in the Icelandic group conveying this particular item by demonstrating the feeling of being “closed in.” *FINISH*, whilst less iconic, still had considerable variation. The remaining 262 items in the word list elicited signs that were used in the final analysis and are detailed as follows:

Analysis

Table 3: Percentage of ‘Identical’, ‘Similar’ and ‘Different’ realisations

IDENTICAL	124 of 262 = 47%	63%
SIMILAR	41 of 262 = 16%	
DIFFERENT	97 of 262 = 37%	

Figure 1: Percentage of ‘Identical’, ‘Similar’ and ‘Different’ realisations*Identical*

The following items in the wordlist were found to yield signs sharing the parameters of hand configuration (together with orientation of the hand/palm), location and movement in both DSL and ISL:

Table 4: ‘Identical’ Realisations

1	man (n)	84	December (n)	175	(to) help (v)
7	mother (n)	88	prison (n)	180	(to) ask (v)
8	father (n)	89	bathroom (n)	182	(to) sell (v)
11	child (n)	98	tree (n)	183	(to) pay (v)
14	family (n)	100	garbage (n)	184	(to) work (v)
15	husband (n)	106	snow (n)	185	(to) laugh (v)
16	wife (n)	107	moon (n)	186	(to) understand (v)
17	person (n)	109	sun (n)	188	(to) continue (v)
20	angel (n)	111	rain (n)	189	(to) start (v)
21	devil(n)	113	feather (n)	191	(to) vomit (v)
22	priest (n)	114	leaf (n)	194	(to) kill (v)
23	nun (n)	116	river (n)	197	(to) stand (v)
26	judge (n)	117	string (n)	199	(to) build (v)
27	president (n)	118	smooth (adj)	200	(to) come(v)
29	meat (n)	119	sharp (adj)	203	(to) sleep(v)
30	milk (n)	120	animal (n)	207	(to) kiss(v)
35	egg (n)	121	bird (n)	208	(to) listen(v)

37	what? (pro)	123	worm (n)	209	(to) see(v)
39	where? (pro)	127	horse (n)	212	(to) read(v)
43	which? (pro)	129	cat (n)	213	(to) write(v)
44	blue (adj)	131	bug (insect) (n)	215	(to) love(v)
50	colour (n)	133	elephant (n)	222	fat (adj)
51	Monday (n)	134	bear (n)	224	wide (adj)
61	spring (n)	136	yes (adv)	226	correct (adj)
63	week (n)	142	million (n)	228	full (adj)
64	month (n)	147	all (det)	229	thirsty (adj)
66	now (adv)	148	not (adv)	230	hungry (adj)
67	night (n)	150	almost(adj/adv)	236	rich (adj)
70	tomorrow (n)	152	many (det)	239	dirty (adj)
75	march (n)	160	happy (adj) *	242	(cost) free (adj)
76	April (n)	163	(to) count (v)	243	same (adj)
77	May (n)	167	(to) explain (v)	244	different (adj)
81	September (n)	169	(to) remember(v)	246	true (adj)
82	October (n)	171	(to) decide (v)	248	old (adj)
83	November (n)	173	(to) think (v)	251-270	1-20 (nouns)

As an example in the realisation of the noun CHILD (Item 11) both sets of informants articulate the sign with the same hand configuration, with the palm (closed fist) orientation towards the signer; in the same location, (i.e. on the dominant side of the body of the signer), and with the same up and down movement.

Item Number 11: “CHILD” (Identical)

[Icelandic \(Barn\) Clip 1](#)

[Danish \(Barn\) Clip 2](#)

Similar:

The following signs shared two of the three parameters (hand configuration/location/movement) in common. As anticipated, only one item differed in terms of orientation of the hand but shared the same hand configuration (item 187 TO ARGUE). As found in the McKee and Kennedy (2000) study, results for changes in hand configuration yielded the greatest parametric change. Less frequently found were changes in location, movement and orientation of the palm respectively.

Table 5a: Total ‘Similar’ Realisations

12	grandmother (n)	85	school (n)	176	(to) fail (v)
13	grandfather (n)	91	bedroom (n)	181	(to) buy (v)
19	God (n)*	93	money (n)	187	(to) argue (v)
34	fish (n)	108	star (n)	195	(to) sing (v)
36	how many(adv)	112	mountain (n)	196	(to) sit (v)
48	red (adj)	115	grass (n)	204	(to) dream(v)
49	white (adj)	124	snake (n)	205	(to) eat(v)
55	Friday (n)	125	cow (n)	210	(to) search (v)
56	Saturday (n)	130	pig (n)	211	(to) meet(v)
57	Sunday (n)	158	brave (adj)*	219	bad (adj)
62	year (n)	162	(to)change (v)	231	heavy (adj)
69	yesterday (n)	165	(to) want (v)	241	afraid (adj)
79	July (n)	168	(to) lie (v)	245	young (adj)
80	August (n)	174	(to) know (v)		

Table 5b: Hand Configuration Contrast (21 items)

12	grandmother (n)	93	money (n)	205	(to) eat(v)
13	grandfather (n)	130	pig (n)	210	(to) search (v)
19	God (n)*	162	(to) change (v)	211	(to) meet(v)
49	white (adj)	174	(to) know (v)	231	heavy (adj)
79	July (n)	176	(to) fail (v)	241	afraid (adj)
80	August (n)	181	(to) buy (v)	245	young (adj)
91	bedroom (n)	196	(to) sit (v)	187	(to) argue (v) (palm orient.)

For example, in the realisation of PIG both the location and movement of the signs are identical but there is variation in the hand configuration – with the articulation consisting of a closed fist handshape facing down in Danish Sign Language as opposed to an open flat hand with thumb extended with palm facing signer in Icelandic Sign Language.

Item Number 130: “PIG” (Similar: Hand Configuration Contrast)

[Icelandic \(Svín\) Clip 3](#)

[Danish \(Gris\) Clip 4](#)

Table 5c: Movement Contrast (14 items)

34	fish (n)	57	Sunday (n)	124	snake (n)
36	how many (adv)	62	year (n)	165	(to) want (v)
48	red (adj)	108	star (n)	195	(to) sing (v)
55	Friday (n)	112	mountain (n)	204	(to) dream(v)
56	Saturday (n)	115	grass (n)		

In the articulation of SATURDAY for example there is a MOVEMENT contrast, with the parameters of hand configuration and location remaining the same. In DSL there is a side to side movement and in ISL a circular movement.

Item Number 56: “SATURDAY” (Similar: Movement Contrast)

[Icelandic \(Laugardagur\) Clip 5](#)

[Danish \(Lørdag\) Clip 6](#)

Table 5d: Location Contrast (6 items)

69	yesterday (n)	125	cow (n)	168	(to) lie (v)
85	school (n)	158	brave (adj)*	219	bad (adj)

For example in the articulation of BAD the hand configuration and movement are similar but there is variation in the location of the articulation. The Danish sign begins in the lower face/chin area before moving downward; in contrast the Icelandic sign begins its articulation on the upper cheek, moving downward but remaining in the location of the face.

Item Number 219: “BAD” (Similar: Location Contrast)

[Icelandic \(Vondur\) Clip 7](#)

[Danish \(Dårlig\) Clip 8](#)

Table 5e: Orientation (finger) Contrast (1 items)

187	(to) argue (finger orientation)
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Item Number 187: “ARGUE” (Similar: Orientation of the palm/hand contrast)

[Icelandic \(Rífast\) Clip 9](#)

[Danish \(Skændes\) Clip 10](#)

Different

The following items shared none of the three parameters in common:

Table 6: ‘Different’ Realisations

2	woman (n)	78	June (n)	157	thanks (int)
3	boy (n)	86	church (n)	159	sad (adj) *
4	girl (n)	87	city (n)	161	(to) play (v)
5	son (n)	90	kitchen (n)	164	(to) learn (v)
6	daughter (n)	92	paper (n)	166	(to) confess (v)
9	brother (n)	94	blood (n)	170	(to) forget (v)
10	sister (n)	95	stone (n)	172	(to) believe (v)
18	friend (n)	96	flower (n)	177	(to) succeed (v)
24	teacher (n)	97	fire (n)	178	(to) live (v)
25	doctor (n)	99	sea (n)	179	(to) die (v)
28	salt (n)	101	wood (n)	192	(to) hate (v)
31	bread (n)	102	water (n)	198	(to) exercise (v)
32	apple (n)	110	wind (n)	201	(to) go (v)
33	chicken (n)	122	sheep (n)	206	(to) forgive(v)
38	why? (pro)	126	mouse (n)	214	(to) sign (v)
40	when? (pro)	128	dog (n)	216	angry (adj)
41	who? (pro)	132	lion (n)	217	ugly (adj)
42	how? (pro)	135	story (n)	218	beautiful (adj)
45	green (adj)	137	no (adv)	220	good (adj)
46	black (adj)	138	if (conj)	225	warm (adj)
47	yellow (adj)	139	nothing (n)	227	boring (adj)
52	Tuesday (n)	140	hundred (n)	232	dry (adj)
53	Wednesday (n)	141	thousand (n)	233	wet (adj)
54	Thursday (n)	143	more adj/adv	234	cold (adj)
58	summer (n)	144	again (adv)	235	hot (adj)
59	winter (n)	145	because (conj)	237	poor (adj)
60	autumn (n)	146	name (n)	238	clean (adj)
65	morning (n)	149	never (adv)	240	tired (adj)
68	day (n)	151	always (adv)	247	false (adj)
71	holiday (n)	153	few (det)	249	new (adj)
72	party (n)	154	maybe (adv)	250	deaf (adj)
73	January (n)	155	some (det)*		
74	February (n)	156	with (prep)		

Item Number 101: “WOOD” (Different)**[Icelandic \(Viður\) Clip 11](#)****[Danish \(Træ\) Clip 12](#)**

Examples of signs that shared one parameter suggest possible relatedness due to visual semantic motivation. The Icelandic sign for WOMAN (Kona) had a different hand configuration to the Danish sign for this concept (Kvinde) and an internal

movement, but both signs were located in the breast region of the trunk of the body, and therefore there could be some semantic motivation for the choice of location.

Item 2: “WOMAN”

[Icelandic \(Kona\) Clip 13](#)

[Danish \(Kvinde\) Clip 14](#)

Similarly, the signs for DEAF were realised with different hand configuration and movements but were located adjacent to and next to the ear respectively.

Two items of considerable interest were YEAR and MOUNTAIN. Signs for these two items shared the same hand configuration and location and for the most part, movement. However, they were realised with a slight contrast in this latter parameter but quite unlike other signs that differed in terms of movement.

Firstly, YEAR comprised of a circular movement for both groups however the Icelandic sign moved away from the trunk (body) towards neutral space whilst for Danes it involved a movement close to the trunk.

Item 62: “YEAR”

[Icelandic \(Ár\) Clip 15](#)

[Danish \(År\) Clip 16](#)

MOUNTAIN was realised with the same movement, path and plane but differing directions. Icelanders produced “MOUNTAIN” starting at the top (of the mountain) moving downwards whilst Danes started at the bottom with an upward directional movement.

Item 112 “MOUNTAIN”

[Icelandic \(Fjall\) Clip 17](#)

[Danish \(Bjerg\) Clip 18](#)

Results For Signs for Country Names

Comparisons of signs from specific semantic categories showed no obvious cross-comparability except the 30 items listed in the separate word list of proper nouns for “countries”. When this word list was compared across the two groups and with an apparently unrelated sign language, British Sign Language, it appeared, as hypothesised, that there was a propensity for signs for countries to be similarly

articulated across at least three European Sign Languages. The analysis yielded the following results:

Table 7: Realisation of ‘Countries’

BSL and ISL	BSL and DSL	ISL and DSL
IDENTICAL 18 /30 (60%)	IDENTICAL 21/ 30 (70%)	IDENTICAL 25/30 (84%)
<i>SIMILAR</i> 5/ 30 (17%)	<i>SIMILAR</i> 2/ 30 (7%)	<i>SIMILAR</i> 4/ 30 (13%)
<u>DIFFERENT</u> 7/30 (23%)	DIFFERENT 7/30 (23%)	<u>DIFFERENT</u> 1/30 (3%)

Of the 30 items only seven from both ISL and DSL were different (sharing no parameters) from BSL. Only one realisation was different when comparing DSL and ISL. Overall the greatest degree of similarity (if both the ‘identical’ and ‘similar’ scores are combined) is between Icelandic and Danish Sign Languages.

Table 8a: ISL Realisations compared to BSL

IDENTICAL	<i>SIMILAR</i>	<u>DIFFERENT</u>
America (US)	Belgium	Africa
Australia	Brazil	Asia
Austria	New Zealand	England
Canada	Portugal	France
China		India
Denmark		Poland
Europe		Russia
Finland		
Germany		
Holland		
Iceland		
Italy		
Japan		
Malaysia		
Norway		
Spain		
Sweden		
Switzerland		
Turkey		

Table 8b: DSL Realisations compared to BSL

IDENTICAL	<i>SIMILAR</i>	<u>DIFFERENT</u>
America (US)	Belgium	Africa
Australia	Portugal	Asia
Austria		England
Brazil		France
Canada		India
China		Poland
Denmark		Russia
Europe		
Finland		
Germany		
Holland		
Iceland		
Italy		
Japan		
Malaysia		
New Zealand		
Norway		
Spain		
Sweden		
Switzerland		
Turkey		

Table 8c: ISL Realisations compared to DSL

IDENTICAL	<i>SIMILAR</i>	<u>DIFFERENT</u>
America (US)	Africa	Brazil
Asia	Canada	
Australia	China	
Austria	Switzerland	
Belgium		
Denmark		
England		
Europe		
Finland		
France		
Germany		
Holland		
Iceland		
India		
Italy		
Japan		
Malaysia		
New Zealand		

Norway		
Poland		
Portugal		
Russia		
Spain		
Sweden		
Turkey		

Discussion and Conclusion

Over 60% of signs were found to be similarly articulated in DSL and ISL using the main word list. This percentage was far higher than that anticipated by informants. The shorter 30-item list, comprising only of words for countries, indicated a propensity for a much higher degree of lexical similarity than other semantic categories. Even when an unrelated sign language, BSL, was used to compare signs for these items, the scores were still high. This supports the hypothesis that signs for countries tend to be fairly standardised in contemporary usage (certainly amongst European Deaf communities) and that there are methodological implications for the inclusion of signs for countries in lists used for lexical comparisons of European Sign Languages.

Overall if we appeal to the lexicostatistical classification of languages, as reported by Crowley (1992), Gudschinsky (1956), McKee and Kennedy (2000) and Parkhurst & Parkhurst (2003) the two varieties in the present study constitute distinct languages but are related and belong to the same language family.

Such an assertion is not without a list of potential caveats. As McKee and Kennedy (2000) acknowledge, the lexicostatistical model is somewhat controversial. For example Dixon (1997, p. 36) questions the validity of assuming a distinction between a supposed “core vocabulary” which behaves differently from a non-core vocabulary; that the lexicon of all languages is replaced at a constant rate; or even that genetic or contact relationships can be determined from lexical studies alone. We must emphasise however that the purpose of the present study was not to investigate language change but to provide a preliminary account of the extent to which the two varieties share similar lexical forms in contemporary usage.

Moreover it is also well known amongst sign language linguists that sign languages are more similar in form than spoken languages. Woll (2001, p. 25) for example suggests that they are comparatively “mutually compatible and probably overlapping” due to such features as iconicity, uniformity in spatial syntax, and the ability of the users to exploit gesture when conversing with a signer of another language. The extent of this similarity has yet to be fully determined and we therefore call for further lexical comparisons to take place in other sign languages.

Certain methodological and sociolinguistic issues are brought sharply into focus in this study. As previously determined by other sign linguists, the use of word lists designed for the study of spoken languages are not necessarily applicable for sign language investigation. Moreover lists designed for some sign language comparisons also need to be further piloted. In this study for example (see p. 14 above) eight lexical items had to be removed from the listing due to marked variability in form across and within the subject groupings. The latter in itself however provides for an

interesting investigation of variation in sign language use and a study of lexical variants would provide rich data for comparison with spoken language studies.

A further factor, not elaborated on in this paper, but in need of investigation in the study of sign lexicon is that of iconicity: identification of signs which may be iconic in one language and not in another (or equally iconic across varieties yet differently realised); consideration of their inclusion in word lists and their effect upon the results has yet to be fully assessed and determined.

Moreover, a further area in need of refinement and debate is that relating to the analysis of sign lexicon. For example in classifying signs as 'similar' within this study, as in other previous studies, a discrete determination was made, i.e. if signs shared two parameters in common but differed in the third they were classified as 'similar'. However, classification of similarity could be more sensitively measured. Signs may, for example, be placed on a continuum of similarity. For example there may be gradations of similarity with some signs seemingly being realised as more similar than others with regard to a change in parameter, ranging from a very slight variation in movement from one location to an adjacent location (e.g., from back of hand to wrist, a contrast between the Danish and Icelandic signs for SWEDEN), to a more notable contrast (e.g., from side of the forehead to the chin, a contrast in the Icelandic/Danish signs for BELGIUM when compared with BSL). Measurement of such variation is not however straightforward and further research is needed to refine this type of analysis.

In conclusion, this study provides the first empirical evidence of similarity between the lexicon of ISL and DSL. Further lexical and morphosyntactic investigations are necessary to determine the extent of relatedness and language change. Lexical studies of sign languages are still very much in their infancy and although analytical frameworks for sign language comparisons are available, there is still a need to further develop and refine methodological frameworks and analytical tools.

Note

- 1 In 1867, Pastor Páll Pálsson was appointed the first teacher of deaf children in Iceland, and in 1872 the Alþingi (Icelandic Parliament) stipulated that education be made compulsory for deaf children from 10 to 14 years (Egilsson & Guðmundsdóttir, 1989).

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APPENDIX

Final Word List with Translations

No:	ENGLISH	ICELANDIC	DANISH
1	man (n)	maður	mand
2	woman (n)	kona	kvinde
3	boy (n)	strákur	dreng
4	girl (n)	stelpa	pige
5	son (n)	sonur	søn
6	daughter (n)	dóttir	datter
7	mother (n)	móðir/mamma	mor
8	father (n)	faðir/pabbi	far
9	brother (n)	bróðir	bror
10	sister (n)	systir	søster
11	child (n)	barn	barn

12	grandmother (n)	amma	bedstemor
13	grandfather (n)	afi	bedstefar
14	family (n)	fjölskylda	familie
15	husband (n)	eiginmaður	mand
16	wife (n)	eiginkona	kone
17	person (n)	persóna/manneskja	person
18	friend (n)	vinur	ven
19	God (Pro)	Guð	Gud
20	angel (n)	engill	engel
21	devil (n)	djöfull	djævel
22	priest (n)	prestur	præst
23	nun (n)	nunna	nonne
24	teacher (n)	kennari	lærer
25	doctor (n)	læknir	læge
26	judge (n)	dómari	dommer
27	president (n)	forseti	præsident
28	salt (n)	salt	salt
29	meat (n)	kjöt	kød
30	milk (n)	mjólk	mælk
31	bread (n)	brauð	brød
32	apple (n)	epli	æble
33	chicken (n)	kjúklingur	kylling
34	fish (n)	fiskur	fisk
35	egg (n)	egg	æg

36	how many (adv)	hve margir	hvor mange
37	what? (pro)	hvað	hvad
38	why? (pro)	af hverju	hvorför
39	where? (pro)	hvar	hvor
40	when? (pro)	hvenær	hvornår
41	who? (pro)	hver	hvem
42	how? (pro)	hvernig	hvordan
43	which? (pro)	hvaða	hvilke
44	blue (adj)	blár	blå
45	green (adj)	grænn	grøn
46	black (adj)	svartur	sort
47	yellow (adj)	gulur	gul
48	red (adj)	rauður	rød
49	white (adj)	hvítur	hvid
50	colour (n)	litur	farve
51	Monday (n)	Mánudagur	Mandag
52	Tuesday (n)	Þriðjudagur	Tirsdag
53	Wednesday (n)	Miðvikudagur	Onsdag
54	Thursday (n)	Fimmtudagur	Torsdag
55	Friday (n)	Föstudagur	Fredag
56	Saturday (n)	Laugardagur	Lørdag
57	Sunday (n)	Sunnudagur	Søndag
58	summer (n)	sumar	sommer
59	winter (n)	vetur	vinter
60	autumn (n)	haust	efterår
61	spring (n)	vor	forår

62	year (n)	ár	år
63	week (n)	vika	uge
64	month (n)	mánuður	måned
65	morning (n)	morgunn	morgen
66	now (adv)	núna	nu
67	night (n)	nótt	nat
68	day (n)	dagur	dag
69	yesterday (n)	í gær	i går
70	tomorrow (n)	á morgun	i morgen
71	holiday (n)	frí	ferie
72	party (n)	partí/veisla	fest
73	January (n)	Janúar	Januar
74	February (n)	Febrúar	Februar
75	March (n)	Mars	Marts
76	April (n)	Apríl	April
77	May (n)	Maí	Maj
78	June (n)	Júní	Juni
79	July (n)	Júlí	Juli
80	August (n)	Ágúst	August
81	September (n)	September	September
82	October (n)	Október	Oktober
83	November (n)	Nóvember	November
84	December (n)	Desember	December
85	school (n)	skóli	skole
86	church (n)	kirkja	kirke
87	city (n)	borg	by

88	prison (n)	fangelsi	fængsel
89	bathroom (n)	baðherbergi	badeværelse
90	kitchen (n)	eldhús	køkken
91	bedroom (n)	svefnherbergi	soveværelse
92	paper (n)	pappír	papir
93	money (n)	peningar	penge
94	blood (n)	blóð	blod
95	stone (n)	steinn	sten
96	flower (n)	blóm	blomst
97	fire (n)	eldur	ild
98	free (n)	tré	træ
99	sea (n)	sjór	hav
100	garbage (n)	rusl	affald
101	wood (n)	viður	træ
102	water (n)	vatn	vand
103	dust (n)	ryk	støv
104	earth (n)	jörð	jord
105	ice (n)	ís	is
106	snow (n)	snjór	sne
107	moon (n)	máni/tungl	måne
108	star (n)	stjarna	stjerne
109	sun (n)	sól	sol
110	wind (n)	vindur	vind
111	rain (n)	rigning	regn

112	mountain (n)	fjall	bjerg
113	feather (n)	fjöður	fjer
114	leaf (n)	lauf	blad
115	grass (n)	gras	græs
116	river (n) (big river)	fljót (stór á)	flod
117	string (n)	band/snæri	snor
118	smooth (adj)	sléttur/hnökralaus	glat
119	sharp (adj)	beittur	skarp
120	animal (n)	dýr (hundur/köttur)	dyr
121	bird	fugl	fugl
122	sheep (n)	kind	får
123	worm (n)	ormur	orm
124	snake (n)	snákur	slange
125	cow (n)	kýr	ko
126	mouse (n)	mús	mus
127	horse (n)	hestur	hest
128	dog (n)	hundur	hund
129	cat (n)	köttur	kat
130	pig (n)	svín	gris
131	bug (insect) (n)	padda/skordýr	insekt
132	lion	ljón	løve
133	elephant	fill	elefant
134	bear	björn	bjørn

135	story (n)	saga	historie
136	yes (adv)	já	ja
137	no (adv)	nei	nej
138	if (adv)	ef	hvis
139	nothing (n)	ekkert	ingenting
140	hundred (n)	hundrað	hundrede
141	thousand (n)	þúsund	tusind
142	million (n)	milljón	million
143	more (adv)	meira	mere
144	again (adv)	aftur	igen
145	because (adv)	af því að	fordi
146	name (n)	nafn	navn
147	all (adv)	allt	alt
148	not (adv)	ekki	ikke
149	never (adv)	aldrei	aldrig
150	almost (adv)	næstum	næsten
151	always (adv)	alltaf	altid
152	many (adv)	margir	mange
153	few (adv)	fáir	få
154	maybe (adv)	kannski	måske
155	some	sumt	nogle
156	with (adv)	með	med
157	thanks	Takk	tak

158	brave (adj)	hugrakkur	modig
159	sad	dapur	trist
160	happy	glaður	glad
161	(to) play (v)	leika sér	lege
162	(to) change (v)	breyta	ændre
163	(to) count (v)	telja	tælle
164	(to) learn (v)	læra	lære
165	(to) want (v)	langa í	vil
166	(to) confess	játa	tilstå
167	(to) explain	útskýra	forklare
168	(to) lie (v)	ljúga	lyve
169	(to) remember (v)	muna	huske
170	(to) forget (v)	gleyma	glemme
171	(to) decide (v)	ákveða	beslutte
172	(to) believe (v)	trúa	tro
173	(to) think (v)	hugsa	tænke
174	(to) know (v)	vita	vide
175	(to) help (v)	hjálpa	hjælpe
176	(to) fail (v)	mistakast	mislykkes
177	(to) succeed (v)	takast	lykkes
178	(to) live (v)	lifa	leve
179	(to) die (v)	deyja	dø
180	(to) ask (v)	spyrja	spørge
181	(to) buy (v)	kaupa	købe
182	(to) sell (v)	selja	sælge
183	(to) pay (v)	borga	betale

184	(to) work (v)	vinna	arbejde
185	(to) laugh (v)	hlæja	grine
186	(to) understand (v)	skilja	forstå
187	(to) argue (v)	rífast	skændes
188	(to) continue (v)	halda áfram	fortsætte
189	(to) start (v)	byrja	begynde
190	(to) finish (v)	enda/ljúka	gøre færdig/slutte
191	(to) vomit (v)	gubba/æla	kaste op
192	(to) hate (v)	hata	hade
193	(to) dance (v)	dansa	danse
194	(to) kill (v)	drepa	dræbe
195	(to) sing (v)	syngja	synges
196	(to) sit (v)	sitja	sidde
197	(to) stand (v)	standa	Stå
198	(to) exercise (v)	æfa/þjálf	motionere
199	(to) build (v)	byggja	bygge
200	(to) come (v)	koma	komme
201	(to) go (v)	fara	gå
202	(to) cook (v)	elda	lave mad
203	(to) sleep (v)	sofa	sove
204	(to) dream (v)	dreyma	drømme
205	(to) eat (v)	borða	spise
206	(to) forgive (v)	fyrirgefa	tilgive
207	(to) kiss (v)	kyssa	kysse
208	(to) listen (v)	hlusta	lytte
209	(to) see (v)	sjá	se

210	(to) search (v)	leita	lede
211	(to) meet (v)	hitta	møde
212	(to) read (v)	lesa	læse
213	(to) write (v)	skrifa	skrive
214	(to) sign (v)	tala táknmál	bruge tegnsprog
215	(to) love (v)	elska	elske
216	angry (adj)	reiður	vred
217	ugly (adj)	ljótur	grim
218	beautiful (adj)	fallegur	smuk
219	bad (adj)	vondur	dårlig
220	good (adj)	góður	god
221	thin (adj)	mjór	tynd
222	fat (adj)	feitur	tyk
223	narrow (adj)	þröngur	small
224	wide (adj)	breiður	bred
225	warm (adj)	hlýr	varm
226	correct (n)	réttur	rigtig
227	boring (adj)	leiðinlegur	kedelig
228	full (adj)	fullur	fuld
229	thirsty (adv)	þyrstur	tørstig
230	hungry (adv)	svangur	sulten
231	heavy (adj)	þungur	tung
232	dry (adj)	þurr	tør
233	wet (adj)	blautur	våd
234	cold (adj)	kaldur	kold
235	hot (adj)	heitur	hed

236	rich (adj)	ríkur	rig
237	poor (adj)	fátækur	fattig
238	clean (adj)	hreinn	ren
239	dirty (adj)	óhreinn	beskidt
240	tired (adv)	þreyttur	træt
241	afraid (adv)	hræddur	bange
242	(cost) free (adv)	ókeypis	gratis
243	same (adj)	sami/sama	samme
244	different (adj)	ólíkur	forskellig
245	young (adj)	ungur	ung
246	true (adj)	satt/rétt	sandt
247	false (adj)	ósatt/rangt	falskt
248	old (adj)	gamall	gammel
249	new (adj)	nýr	ny
250	deaf (adj)	heyrnarlaus	døv
251-270	numbers 1-20	tölur 1-20	nummer 1-20
271	Africa	Afríka	Afrika
272	America (US)	Bandaríkin	Amerika
273	Asia	Asía	Asien
274	Australia	Ástralía	Australien
275	Austria	Austurríki	Østrig
276	Belgium	Belgía	Belgien
277	Brazil	Brasilía	Brasilien
278	Canada	Kanada	Kanada
279	China	Kína	Kina
280	Denmark	Danmörk	Danmark

281	England	England	England
282	Europe	Evrópa	Europa
283	Finland	Finnland	Finland
284	France	Frakkland	Frankrig
285	Germany	Þýskaland	Tyskland
286	Holland	Holland	Holland
287	Iceland	Ísland	Island
288	India	Indland	Indien
289	Italy	Ítalía	Italien
290	Japan	Japan	Japan
291	Malaysia	Malasía	Malajsien
292	New Zealand	Nýja Sjáland	New Zealand
293	Norway	Noregur	Norge
294	Poland	Pólland	Polen
295	Portugal	Portúgal	Portugal
296	Russia	Rússland	Rusland
297	Spain	Spánn	Spanien
298	Sweden	Svíþjóð	Sverige
299	Switzerland	Sviss	Schweitz
300	Turkey	Tyrkland	Tyrkiet

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